

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 SSM-03
HA-05 CCO-00 /081 W
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O R 241742Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 2165
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN NY
USMISSION SINAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 4065

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT MOPS IS LE
SUBJ: MK SHMUEL TOLEDANO ON LEBANON AND BEGIN'S WEAKENING
POSITION

1. SUMMARY. A VISIT TO SOUTHERN LEBANON HAS DISPELLED
DMC MK SHMUEL TOLEDANO'S RESERVATIONS OVER THE
INCURSION INTO LEBANON. HE EXPRESSED HIGH PRAISE
FOR WEIZMAN'S HANDLING OF THE SITUATION AND, IN
PARTICULAR, THE DECISION TO CALL A UNILATERAL CEASE-
FIRE. IN THE WAKE OF BEGIN'S PERCEIVED FAILURE IN
WASHINGTON, TOLEDANO AND ABOUT HALF THE DMC KNESSET
FACTION WILL PROPOSE THAT THE DMC LEAVE THE COALITION.
WHETHER OR NOT THE DMC REMAINS IN THE GOVERNMENT,
TOLEDANO BELIEVES BEGIN WILL SURVIVE IN THE SHORT TERM.
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WEIZMAN DOES NOT HAVE THE SUPPORT TO DUMP HIM.
HOWEVER, TOLEDANO FORESEES A POLITICAL REALIGNMENT IN
ISRAEL WHICH WILL SUPERSEDE BEGIN. END SUMMARY

2. DMC MK SHMUEL TOLEDANO CALLED AT THE EMBASSY TODAY
TO APPLY FOR A VISA. (HE IS LEAVING MARCH 30 FOR A
FIVE WEEK LECTURING STINT AT HARVARD.) OVER COFFEE

HE DISCUSSED WITH AN EMBOFF THE LEBANESE SITUATION AND ISRAEL'S TROUBLED POLITICAL SCENE.

3. AS A MEMBER OF KNESSET FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE COMMITTEE, TOLEDANO WAS WITH THE COMMITTEE ON ITS TOUR YESTERDAY OF SOUTHERN LEBANON (TEL AVIV 3989). HE SAID THAT, HAVING SEEN THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND, HE FEELS MUCH BETTER ABOUT THE IDF OPERATION THAN BEFORE HIS VISIT. THREE THINGS GREATLY IMPRESSED HIM: THE STRICT IDF ADHERENCE TO THE CEASEFIRE, THE POSITIVE ATTITUDE OF THE ARMY TO THE RETURN OF REFUGEES, AND THE IDF'S COOPERATION WITH UN FORCES. TOLEDANO SAID HE NOW UNDERSTANDS AND APPROVES OF THE ISRAELI ADVANCE BEYOND THE 10 KILOMETER LIMIT TO THE LITANI. THE ADVANCE HAD BEEN THE MAIN OBJECT OF CRITICISM DURING WEIZMAN'S BRIEFING OF THE COMMITTEE ON MARCH 21. TOLEDANO ADMITTED THAT BEFORE YESTERDAY HE HIMSELF HAD BEEN CERTAIN THAT EXTENSION OF THE OPERATION BEYOND THE 10 KILOMETER SECURITY BELT WAS A MISTAKE. HIS DMC COLLEAGUE, AMNON RUBENSTEIN, WAS ANOTHER MK WHO HAD STRONGLY CRITICIZED THE IDF SECOND STAGE ADVANCE. NOW HE, TOO, LIKE THE OTHER CRITICS IN THE COMMITTEE, APPROVES. BEING AT THE LITANI MEANS THE IDF IS IN A POSITION TO TURN OVER TO UN FORCES CONTROL OF THE LITANI BRIDGES. FROM THIS LINE (AT THE LITANI) UNIFIL COULD, ASSUMING IT HAS THE PROPER MANDATE, INTERDICT MOVEMENT

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OF PLO EQUIPMENT INTO SOUTHERN LEBANON -- AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK HAD THE UN LINE BEEN AT THE 10 KM LIMIT.

4. TOLEDANO EMPHASIZED THE SCRUPULOUS OBSERVANCE OF THE CEASEFIRE EXERCISED BY THE IDF. WEIZMAN, WHO AGAIN BRIEFED THE COMMITTEE FOLLOWING ITS TOUR, SAID THAT NOT A BULLET WILL BE FIRED WITHOUT HIS APPROVAL AND, TO TOLEDANO, THIS SEEMS TO BE THE CASE. MOREOVER, ISRAELI TROOPS ARE NOT ONLY ASSISTING RETURNING REFUGEES, THEY ARE ENCOURAGING THEIR RETURN. THE HELP AND COOPERATION GIVEN TO ENTERING UN FORCES BY THE ISRAELIS WAS ALSO REMARKABLE TO TOLEDANO.

5. TOLEDANO WAS LAVISH IN HIS PRAISE OF WEIZMAN FOR HIS HANDLING OF THE OVERALL SITUATION, ESPECIALLY FOR HIS QUICK AND STEADY HAND. HE THOUGHT THE DECISION FOR A UNILATERAL CEASEFIRE A COURAGEOUS AND TIMELY ACT AND HE GAVE WEIZMAN CREDIT FOR ITS STRICT IMPLEMENTATION.

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6. TURING TO A DISCUSSION OF WEIZMAN'S CALL FOR A "NATIONAL PEACE COALITION", TOLEDANO SAID HE AND SEVERAL OF HIS COLLEAGUES HAVE CALLED FOR A MEETING OF THE DMC COUNCIL NEXT WEEK IN THE WAKE OF BEGIN'S FAILURE IN WASHINGTON. THEY WILL PRESS FOR A DECISION TO LEAVE THE GOVERNMENT AND HE FEELS THAT THE MOVE HAS THE SUPPORT OF SIX OR SEVEN OTHER DMC MK'S. HE NAMED DAVID GOLOMB, MORDECHAI ELGRABLI, AND "EVEN ASSAF YAGURI" AS JOINING THE THREE SHINUI MK'S - RUBENSTEIN, WERTHEIMER, WIRSHUBSKI. HOWEVER, TOLEDANO SAID HE HAD NO IDEA WHAT THE COUNCIL WILL DECIDE; "THAT BODY IS COMPLETELY UNPREDICTABLE."

7. ALTHOUGH DEFECTION BY THE DMC WOULD SERIOUSLY UNDERMINE BEGIN, TOLEDANO DID NOT BELIEVE BEGIN WOULD
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RESIGN. HE THOUGHT THAT IN THE SHORT TERM BEGIN WILL PROBABLY BE ABLE TO WEATHER THE STORM THAT IS BREWING AROUND HIM. MOST OF THE COUNTRY WILL RALLY BEHIND

BEGIN'S EXPECTED CALL FOR SUPPORT AND UNITY IN THE
FACE OF ASSUMED US PRESSURE. ONLY INTELLECTUALS AND
ISRAEL'S ELITE WILL DEBATE WHETHER BEGIN SHOULD RESIGN.
AS FOR THE OTHER COALITION PARTIES, TOLEDANO SAID BEGIN
CAN COUNT ON FIRM NRP SUPPORT, AGUDAT
YISRAEL WON'T ROCK THE BOAT AND, "OF COURSE," MOST OF
LIKUD REMAINS IN HIS POCKET. WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN
WEIZMAN COULD EXPECT ONLY MINORITY SUPPORT IN THE LIBERAL
PARTY AND PROBABLY NOT ONE LIBERAL MINISTER. NEVERTHELESS,
TOLEDANO DID SEE A REALIGNMENT OF POLITICAL FORCES
SHAPING UP IN ISRAEL. IT WILL, HOWEVER, TAKE A LITTLE
TIME. SOMEWHERE DOWN THE ROAD HE COULD SEE WEIZMAN
HEADING A GOVERNMENT THAT WOULD INCLUDE LABOR AND THE
DMC AS ITS CORE AND UNDEFINED SEGMENTS OF OTHER
GROUPINGS. THE FAMILIAR POLITICAL GUIDELINES WILL DIS-
SOLVE AND NEW POLITICAL CONSTELLATIONS WILL REPLACE THE
EXISTING PARTY LINE-UPS.

8. COMMENT: TOLEDANO IS COUNTED AMONG THE SHINUI DOVES
IN THE DMC. IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT HE FULLY SUPPORTS
ISRAEL'S MILITARY OPERATION IN LEBANON, HIS LAST
REMAINING DOUBTS HAVING BEEN DISPELLED BY HIS VISIT
TO SOUTHERN LEBANON. TOLEDANO IS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF
BEGIN AND FEELS THAT THE WASHINGTON TALKS SETTLED ONCE
AND FOR ALL, AND IN THE NEGATIVE, THE QUESTION OF BEGIN'S
FLEXIBILITY. WE NOTE THAT TOLEDANO HAD EXPRESSED A
MEASURE OF FAITH AND HOPE IN BEGIN LAST DECEMBER,
SHORTLY AFTER PUBLICATION OF BEGIN'S PEACE PLAN. VIETS

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